

Prof. R. Giles

“And can I tell you a story about that!”

Prof. R. Giles is a **classicist** and **philologist**, with extensive publications in **Latin** (vulgar, classical and ecclesiastical), **Greek** (attic, koine and modern) and **Arabic** (classical and modern standard), and translations of standard historic texts, including **Greek history**.

Privately, he is a pagan that worships **Nyx**, goddess of the night, and has limited **prophetic** abilities.

Background

You have recently been contacted by **Professor Gregory Jenkins**, the head of Archeology and Antiquities at Princeton University. It seems he has some work that could use your expertise in languages related to an Oracle of Nyx. Jenkins also alluded that he knew of your worshipping the pagan god, Nyx, the Greek personification of the night. The work not only interests you, but you wonder if it plays into the prophetic dream you have been having: an alter in a Greek building, built as the ancients built their temples and oracles. The alter, you know, was hollow, and contains an artifact of holy power to Nyx.

Setting the Scene

Prof. Jenkins wants to see you in person, and his department pays for your trip to Princeton. Soon you find yourself amongst a group of four other people in Prof. Jenkins’s lavish third floor office: Prof Jenkins himself; Dr. Bowen, an archaeologist; Dr. Singh, a paleontologist; and Dr. Wrona, a psychologist and specialist in the occult.

Prof. Jenkins is an old man close to 70. He walks slowly, with an obvious limp, and supports himself with an ornate cane. His office is fairly luxurious, with a large, solid wooden desk sitting in front of the windows. Various antiquities decorate the office: pottery in glass cabinets, statues great and small on desks and shelves, weapons and armor hang on display. Most of the artifacts appear to be Greek, or related to Greek mythology.

After passing out drinks (whiskey, coffee and tea), Prof. Jenkins explains the work that he has brought you together for.

A few months ago, **Dr James Templeton** from the department led an expedition to explore the ruins of the **Acropolis Achlys** on **Kleitos Island**, one of the Greek islands in the Aegean sea. Achlys was rumored to have once been the home to one of the darker mystery cults that had built a community for itself around the **Oracle of Echidna**, who was one of the chthonic Greek gods, a nymph who was often called the **Mother of all Monsters**. This was the only known Oracle to the god, and Templeton had reported that his team had found the ruins and begun the excavation work.

“Three months ago,” Jenkins says, “James sent this letter and a roll of 620 film, which I’ve had developed” He hands you note 1.

“As you can see,” he says, “we’re in need of a paleontologist. **Dr Singh**, well, you were James’s first choice. And so here you are. Your work on the reconstruction of the *Hypacrosaurus altispinus* specimen was really quite exemplary. And surely there will be a paper in this Kleitos work as well,

Prof Jenkins
Department of Archeology and Antiquities
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey
USA

Dr. James Templeton
Kleitos Island
c/o Demetrios Patsatzoglou, Magnisias Town

Dear Gregory,

I hope this letter finds you well.

We have made an amazing discovery! A week ago we found the petrified remains of the strangest creature buried in the tomb region of the Oracle: a chimera of sorts, some blend of snake and human, like the lamia or drakaina of mythology. We estimate it to be perhaps 6.5 ft in length, perhaps 7, although how high it stood (if indeed it could even stand), we do not know.

I've attached photographs. As you can see, the corpse is still firmly embedded in the matrix.

Send us a paleontologist who feels confident that they can safely exhume this thing. Dr Singh of Columbia University is my recommendation, but I leave the decision up to you.

All the best,

James Templeton

Note 1: Letter, from James Templeton to Gregory Jenkins

a first description of a possibly new class or even phylum of the animal kingdom." Jenkins takes out a collection of large, black and white photographs. They show the petrified specimen still half buried in sediment.

The picture shows an animal, half human, half snake, although much of it is still covered by rock. Singh says, "This is definitely not of any known class of animal."

Bowen looks at the pictures, and says, "That looks like limestone matrix. It was wise of Templeton to ask for experienced help: that rock can be harder than concrete."

"Unfortunately," Prof. Jenkins says, "there have been complications, which necessitates us sending a larger group of people, a second expedition, if you will." It seems that the letter was the last communication with Dr. Templeton and his team. He has not responded to any further written communication, nor to any radio communiques. A group from the *University of Athens* had visited the island to look for the team, but found the team's rented house on the island abandoned, ransacked, and covered in blood. The local police had said that the body of a half eaten goat had been found on their kitchen table, and that the team was suspected of being involved in some dark cult.

Beware the darkness from which they climb. Seekers will be watched.

Note 2: A letter in Arabic. The right edge is stained a rusty brown.

Worse, the team's camp at the Acropolis was full of bullet holes, which the police explained as being the by product of a populous keen on chasing the archaeologists from the island. No bodies have been found, and a fisherman had reported that the archaeologists had hired him to transport them to Athens. The local police have assumed that Templeton and his team left the island of their own free will.

The teams current whereabouts are unknown — if they had even reached Athens at all.

“This is an important find, not only to the University, but to the scientific community at large. It might not only shift our understanding of animal biology and evolutionary history, but of our own history. And so I want the four of you to go to Kleitos, secure the find, and to reach the bottom of whatever the hell is happening on that island.”

“**Dr Bowen**, you have, um —” and here Jenkins seems a bit uncomfortable, “— a reputation. As a bit of a maverick, with a good feeling for violence and when to employ it. And while I hope those skills won't be required, we need someone like you to help secure the site, ensure the safety of the team members, and to lead the investigation into what happened to Dr. Templeton and his team on the island. If they're still on the island, find them if you can. If they've met an untimely demise, inform the authorities.”

“**Professor Giles**, why I asked you hear is pretty straight forward. Your knowledge of ancient Greek history, language and mythology is unsurpassed. Your translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are standards works in our undergraduate courses. This, and you're, um, devotion to Nyx will provide insights into the minds of any possible cultists on the island. And I understand that you're also fairly familiar with Arabic, yes?” Jenkins hands Giles note 2.

You take the letter. It's written in a combination of classical and modern standard Arabic, and you easily read the translation out to the group. “I can't say I recognize or understand the reference, though,” you say.

Dr. Wrona speaks up: “Beware the darkness from which they climb. That's a reference from the Book of the Dead, an occult text.”

“The Book of the Dead?” Jenkins says. “I haven't heard of it. But that is why I want you here, **Dr. Wrona** — your studies in the occult intrigue me. We seem to have some cultist group involved in this, and your studies in the mind of the cultist and the superstitious might come in useful. I was hoping that you and Professor Giles could determine what cult activities Dr. Templeton was involved in, and to support Dr. Bowen in uncovering the truth of Dr Templeton and his lost team.”

Prof. Jenkins has booked you all rooms on the RMS Queen Mary, thus beginning your trip across the Atlantic and continental Europe. In addition, the department has **provided the team with \$1000**, which you convert to 150 000 Drachma in Athens. You and the others are aware of the high purchasing power of this money, and go about **buying what gear you feel you might need** on Kleitos island.

You then find a small sailing vessel, a fisherman's boat, to take you on the trip to Kleitos. The fisherman is **Joachim Georgiadis**, and he helps the four of you to load your belongings.

The next day a fog settles in around the ship, and apart from the breeze all is still. The sun begins to set, but Joachim seems to know where he is going, and says that you will soon be at your destination: the port of Magnisias, Kleitos island.

Kleitos Island

This is what you're told about the island: Kleitos is a small island. It has only one town, **Magnisias**, which lies on its southern coastline. Magnisias has seen use as a fishing village and port since antiquity. At the island's center, on a hilltop, lies the **Acropolis Achlys**. The ruins are now completely abandoned, and Dr. Templeton's team had reported that few of the island's small population of residents ever visited.

Kleitos has no electricity and few cars. Carts, donkeys and mules are still in common use.

What you know of the others

Dr. Bowen: you've briefly met at a conference on Greek antiquity. They have a reputation for using underhand methods in securing their dig-sites.

Dr. Wrona: you've read their work on extant occult cults and on supernatural thinking in humans. You're not sure if they're a believer or not, but perhaps they will have an open mind?

Dr. Singh: you have not heard of them, and know little of palaeontology.

Dr Templeton: a few years ago, during the war, you had correspondences concerning a Greek translation of the Book of the Dead that he had uncovered. You have never met in person.

Of Nyx

Nyx is the god of the night, born from Chaos and mother to many other personified gods, such as Morpheus (Dream), Nemesis (Retribution), and Eris (Strife). She does not have many cults focused on her, and the only known oracle for her is the Acropolis at Megara, although this is only known from reports in antiquity and has not yet been discovered. She often appears in cults of other gods focused on that god's relationship with the night. When she does appear in mythology, she is generally a powerful figure — but like her representation in the mystery cults, she is a shadowy figure, as suits her personification. Her siblings are Erebus, Gaia, Tartarus and Eros.

You were introduced into her mystery cult many years ago, as a student at University. Since then you have grown in your reverence and understanding of her, and have been granted nightly prophetic dreams.

Of the Gods

You are well read and studied in Greek mythology. Here is some of what you know that might prove interesting:

Book of the Dead — an occult book translated into Greek and Latin from Arabic. The original Arabic text has long been lost, and the extant copies are difficult to come by. You have never read it yourself, and, being written sometime in AD, it's a bit too modern for your interests. The book is a compendium of spells and magical wards.

Drakaina — Female dragons, but usually somewhat human like. For instance, they may be human

from the waist up, serpent from the waist down. Sometimes they may appear completely human (such as Python), or completely reptilian. Echidna may be a drakaina.

Echidna — Having a reptilian, serpentine aspect, Echidna may be a drakaina, and her name means “She Viper”. She is also called the *mother of all monsters*, because her children include Cerebrus, the Chimera, the Hydra, the Gorgons, and others. Her consort is Typhon, and when Zeus overthrew him and banished him into the depths of Tartarus, he allowed Echidna to live as a challenge to future heroes, allowing her to keep her home in underground Arima.

Lamia — Child eating demons, in the form of women with a snake’s body. These are sometimes thought to be the same as the drakaina. The first lamia was the beautiful queen of Libya, who became a child eating demon, while the snake-like form is attributed to John Keats, and his poem, *Lamia*.

Tartarus — from Greek Mythology. Tartarus is both a place and a deity, in the mystery schools it was the unbounded first-entity from which Light and the cosmos was born. As a place, it is beneath the sky (Uranus), the Earth (Gaia), the Sea (Pontus) and Hades (the Underworld). It is a dark place of torment to which unwanted individuals were discarded, including the Titans (after being overthrown by Zeus), those of the Underworld who failed judgment and needed to be punished (as described by Plato, for example, in his dialogue Gorgias), and the ugly misshapen children of Gaia and Uranus, such as the hundred handed ones, the Cyclops, and giants.

Hesiod informs us that a bronze anvil, dropped from Gaia, would take nine days to fall all the way to Tartarus. Zeus, in the Iliad, says that Tartarus is as far from Hades as Gaia is from the heavens. `

Typhon — is the most dangerous “monster” in Greek mythology. He is the son of Gaia and Tartarus, and attempts to destroy Zeus. During their first fight, Tartarus wins but Zeus is healed by Hermes. Zeus defeats Typhon, and imprisons him with the Titans and other monsters in the depths of his father, Tartarus.

Rituals

These are ideas for rituals that you might practice. They have no affect on game-play other than for their roleplaying element, and what the GM will allow you to get away with.

- **Preparation of worship**
- **An Offering to the night**

Attributes

ST	8	HP	8	Languages: Fluent Greek (written / spoken) Fluent Arabic (written / spoken) Fluent English (written / spoken)				
DX	10	Will	14					
IQ	14	Per	14					
HT	10	FP	10					
Basic Lift		13 pounds		Damage	Thrust	1d-3	Swing	1d-2
Basic Speed		5		Basic Move		5		

Skills

Name	Level
History (Greek, Arabic)	15
Research	14
Teaching	10
Writing	12
Guns	9
Knives	8
Parry	6 (with knife)
Dodge	8

Advantages and Disadvantages

- **Prophecy:** Nyx communicates with you in your sleep. Once a day, while asleep, you may ask the DM for a prophetic vision.
- **Eidetic memory:** You remember everything that you experience. You will never have to make a roll to remember something. Players and the GM should provide any details of things that you have experienced and ask for reminders about.
- **Phobia of the dark:** Whenever you are in dark spaces, you feel as though the air around you is solidifying and trapping you. All actions are at -2 while you are in the space without a light, and at -1 while you have a light.

Inventory

- Pen and notebook
- Greek / English dictionary

Some Rules

The game is only played with 3d6s.

The basic mechanic is simple: every action that something important depends on and that is non-trivial should probably be rolled for. Choose one of the character's attributes (innate abilities) or skills (learned abilities). The player rolls 3d6, sums up the value, and if it is less than or equal to the score, they **succeed**.

A roll of 3 or 4 is a **critical success**. Have something extra good happen.

A roll of 17 or 18 is a **critical failure**. Have something bad happen. The gun jams. The radio shorts.